

Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth
United for Safe, Healthy, and Drug-free Communities
Virtual Zoom Meeting Minutes
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

- I. **Welcome and general Zoom housekeeping announcements** – Gina Kahn opened the meeting explaining the unique format of our monthly meeting, and thanked participants for their presence.
- Sue Bunnell - Wilbraham Bos
 - Sherrill Caruana - HWRSD School Committee
 - Anthony Aube - Media Sector Rep from Wilbraham Public Access
 - Jen Buchanan - Wilbraham Public Access
 - Cindy Milner - Business Sector Rep and Local Realtor
 - Lisa Person - HWRSD teacher and Wilbraham Parent
 - Tracey Plantier - Wilbraham Civic leader and Parent
 - Kerri O'Connor - HWRSD outreach coordinator
 - Joe Kielczewski - Fraternal Organization Sector Rep from Rotary Club of Wilbraham Hampden
 - Jared Proulx - Supervisor and SUD coordinator, West Central Family Counseling and Wilbraham Parent
 - Jada Rosario - Coalition Youth
 - Teri Brand- Health Care Professional Sector Rep, HWRSD Nurse Leader, and Wilbraham Health Advisory Board member
 - Dan Menard - Law Sector Rep and SRO Wilbraham PD
 - Amy Kasper - Pediatrician
 - Jen Elkas - Other Community-Based Organization Sector Rep and Senior Care Coordinator at BHN's ICC program
 - Brad Sperry - Rotary Club of Wilbraham Hampden
 - Mike Roy - Schools Sector Rep and MRHS Athletic Director
 - Kathy Fuss - Civic Organization Sector Rep and Wilbraham Parent
 - Tim Person - Coalition Youth
 - Gina Anselmo - Representing Government Sector from the Office of DA Anthony Gulluni, Youth Advisory Board
 - Gina Kahn, Director HWP4Y
 - Ruth DiCristoforo, Coordinator HWP4Y
- II. **Discussion was facilitated by Ruth DiCristoforo with input from all participants, beginning with a personal check in and then a listening session to hear from members on the following questions:**
- A. What is your greatest impact/observations right now concerning Hampden-Wilbraham youth and families?
 - B. What is your sector doing to respond to COVID-19 related circumstances? What are the successes/challenges?
 - C. How can the collective Coalition support you/your sector and each other with this response right now?

- D. Is there anything else you feel is important for our partners and collaborators to know or be thinking about down the road, when our community transitions out of social distancing?

Given the extraordinary times we are all living in right now, the majority of our April 17th meeting was dedicated to a time of checking in with each other, and sharing perspectives on what each person was seeing, and how different sectors were responding to the COVID-19 impacts being felt by youth, families, and the community right now.

Three main themes emerged in our meeting: food insecurity, a concern for the impact of COVID-19 on youth well-being, and a witnessing of community spirit and support.

First, a rise in school meal distribution is being seen within the HWRSD community.

- Sherrill Caruana reported that there seems to be a rising food insecurity among HW families given the steady increase in the HWRSD meal distribution from 110 a day to start, and as of Friday April 17, the number was at 227. Sherrill was interested in finding additional ways to help families in need right now within her School Committee role. Sherrill was going to follow up with the School Committee and report back to the Coalition.
- Kathy said she really liked the idea for a “Neighbors Helping Neighbors” project and would bring this up at the next Wilbraham Junior Women’s Club meeting to see if there is some interest within her organization to support this project where neighborhoods could coordinate a drop in/off site for items of need. Perhaps, there could be a covered barrel in each neighborhood to help each other with items. Kathy will follow up with the Coalition.
- Ruth suggested a drive at BIG Y for this purpose and then a distribution plan to designated areas.
- Joe mentioned how Rotary is helping the community with food/nutrition and schools, specifically with meals and distance learning. Rotary is providing some items to go into the meals program, helping at the Wilbraham Senior, Indian Orchard Survival Center, and working with promoting volunteerism at the Food Bank of Western MA. Volunteers are needed to help with preparing food bags for families in need. Please check <https://www.foodbankwma.org> or contact Amanda at amandar@foodbankwma.org.
- Teri stated how the meals program is increasing and how the response to this overall situation from HWRSD has been exceptional. She felt staff, volunteers, and the community are really working together. Also, the HWRSD nurses will be working with the Wilbraham Public Health nurse, Jill Conselino, to help the state telephone interview residents being called in the COVID-19 Contact Tracing project.

Second, many members expressed an overall concern about the on-going impact of this COVID-19 adverse childhood experience on the overall physical, mental, and emotional health of our youth.

- The 2020 graduating seniors were mentioned as a particularly impacted group, along with youth already struggling with substance use concerns, and/or mental health challenges.
- Brad mentioned how [Search Institute](#), the organization facilitating two Coalition trainings this spring, that was postponed until the fall, has many great resources available on their website to help support families right now.
- Jen E. stated how BHN is taking referrals and assigning therapists right away as well as all other services. ICC, IHT, and Therapeutic Mentors have immediate availability also. All services are being delivered via Telehealth right now - lots of Zoom! To make a referral, you can call BHN Central Intake at 413-737-2439 or email me if you have questions: Jennifer.Elkas@BHNinc.org. BHN also has a new, all-inclusive number for info about all services BHN provides: 413-BHN-WORK.

- Anthony Aube mentioned the difficulty explaining the “why” to younger children.
- Jen B was introduced at the new WPA part-time Intern, who is eager to work with the Coalition to help promote media for the community, as well as work on special Coalition projects.
- Kerri, HWRSO Project Coordinator for Student Access to Behavioral Health and Community Support Program, shared this storybook resource for families with younger children, [My Hero is You](#) on How Kids Can Fight COVID-19, published by the IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee). Kerri, amongst other responsibilities right now, is providing ongoing resource connections and updates regarding community-based resources and mental health agencies due to COVID 19. She can be reached by email at koconnor@hwrso.org or by phone at 413- 575 - 3582.
- Jared mentioned how this really is a “first” for everyone, youth and adults. This is an opportunity to face the challenge of a “first” in something new or different. His clinical practice has made the transition to tele-health for seeing clients for counseling, second best to in-person counseling to maintain a therapeutic relationship.
- Peter wanted the group to know that Learn to Cope is holding their Western MA Support Group Zoom Video meetings, on Thursdays. Call Peter Babineau for meeting information at: 413- 404 - 3539. LTC is also able to help with questions about accessing Narcan, for those in need of this rescue Opioid overdose reversal medication.
- Cindy expressed concerned about a central number for adults and youth to call for help. Ruth said for non-emergencies, anyone can call 2-1-1 to get connected to a wide variety of help resources, from food to counseling, by entering your zip code. Any concerns about a mental health crisis can call the local crisis number for BHN: 413-BHN-WORK. Gina K mentioned how families can contact their school building counselors for support, as well.
- Amy stated her concerns for youth, especially having a daughter in grade 8 and a graduating Senior son, both at key transitions in their lives to high school and college. She feels getting kids on track for in-school learning will be very challenging after this period of stay at home. She also feels sending her son hours away with a incoming class orientation will be very challenging. She mentioned the big challenges for families to be home or work away from home and also support their child’s learning from home.
- Ruth mentioned how two transition programs, Know Before You Go, for graduating seniors and families, and Grade 8 Transition night, coordinated by MRHS, will not be held this year. However, Gina is working to revamp some key aspects of Know Before You Go in order to provide some of this important information. The Coalition is also supporting some spirit projects for graduation seniors and incoming freshmen, in collaboration with MRHS.
- Gina K reported how the first round of Chrome books were distributed to families, to support online learning from home, coordinated by John Derosia. The Coalition donated HWP4Y Cloth bags to aid in this effort, along with our [HELP for Hampden County Families Resource Guide](#).
- Amy also stated her Pediatric practice where she works in Wilbraham has made the transition to accommodate necessary well-visits for kids, and also sick calls by all staff working together.
- Dan reported that Wilbraham PD said mental health and domestic calls have increased since COVID-19, and RX Drop offs have decreased. People are not coming into the station right now.
- Sue mentioned how the Town of Wilbraham had just finished recording a PSA for residents with the help of Wilbraham Public Access and how the town offices plan to start serving residents next week again. Prior to this, departments were serving residents by phone and/or email.
- Ruth reminded everyone how the Hampden-Wilbraham Partners for Youth Coalition has a wide variety of COVID-19 related resources on the [website](#), and encouraged the group to please feel free to share widely.

Third, members also mentioned many examples of community spirit (parades, drive byes, lawn signs, neighbors helping neighbors), creative connections with family and friends via technology, family time, outdoor hiking, and a spirit of resilience with finding new ways to adapt and support each other.

- Tracey mentioned how The Wilbraham Public Library updates their [website](#) frequently with great at home activities for children and teens. There is a great Letter Scavenger hunt for young children on their website.
- Tracey also mentioned the wide and very visible use of the Wilbraham Trail system, how she would like to see a family Health and Wellness trail activity implemented for families, in her role as Wilbraham volunteer.
- Jada Rosario mentioned how teenagers see daily hikes as their number one activity right now. She also mentioned the challenges of keeping young children engaged in learning, missing friends and hugs, and just an overall sadness for the high school seniors who have lost so much this year.
- Lisa updated us on her work as a pre-school teacher and parent/student engagement activities. She also spoke of the challenges working from home and having children at home that need help and support, also. This is a very big challenge for many families.
- Gina A mentioned how the staffing at the DA office is limited to five in the office, most workers are working from home now. The YAB recently had over 60 youth on a zoom video meeting. The kids have started a positivity campaign on Instagram and Gina will share the PSAs being submitted soon. Both Stop the Swerve and Hoops up Springfield have been canceled due to COVID-19.
- Members also talked about Coalition outreach to the Community, a need to have all these community priorities and activities centralized somehow, mentioning a Coalition parade, PSA with video support from WPA saying hello to Youth and We Care About You, supporting the HWRSD Meals program, and making the most of our social media footprint to keep resources current for families. Substance use prevention activities will utilize a collaborative approach for what is practical and viable right now to keep youth safe, healthy, and drug-free.

III. Coalition Business – Gina Kahn provided a written update of Coalition business to members, emailed after the meeting, due to time running over during our meeting:

Dear Coalition Partners and Friends,

Thanks to all who were able to be part of our virtual April 17 meeting, and to those who couldn't join us but contributed their ideas regarding the impacts and opportunities that have resulted from our COVID-19 circumstances.

As anticipated and hoped, the heart-felt core of our discussion took priority over the business agenda! We do, however, have some pressing Coalition administrative concerns and I ask that you take a few minutes to review these items. Regarding decision-making, as current realities necessitate, we can take a more flexible approach to consensus right now. As such, the following are operational or programmatic actions that Ruth or I will be taking to keep the grant-related aspects moving along as best we can during this time. Coalition members should let us know by email if action on any of the following should be postponed until we can have a formal meeting.

I. DFC grant requirement administration (Years 6-10 DFC; Year 4-final- Stop Act)

- a. DFC grants are now managed by CDC instead of SAMHSA. (The current and final year of our “Stop Act” grant remains under SAMHSA.) We will have a new DFC federal project officer, and be learning about additional CDC guidelines and reporting requirements. Stay tuned!
- b. Our DFC “Non-Competing Year 7 Continuation Application” (NCC) was due on April 14. Due to COVID-19 obstacles, we were given until April 30 to assemble all the HWRSD Fiscal Agent pieces. (NCC means that if all is in order upon submission, we get the upcoming year of funding!) CDC has added a few complicated pieces, creating our need for an extension. The most relevant (to us) parts, however, are ready for submission and they are:
 - i. Year 7 Action Plan 10/31/20-10/30/21
Since we are only 6 months into the current cycle, we do not have a need for major revision of the Action Plan. At my request, Ruth identified some modifications that would be beneficial in the upcoming year. We will highlight these at our next meeting.
 - ii. Year 7 Budget
 - 1. We anticipate unspent funds because of the postponements of Spring/Summer activities. but we cannot request carryover until July, 2020. As such, our proposed Year 7 budget does not look significantly different from the approved Year 6.
 - 2. One important aspect of the Year 7 budget is that we must now transition to a **125% match** to the \$125,000 federal funding. **This required us to identify \$156,000 of matching resources.** You may recall from our previous discussions that we continually document the many ways in which the entire community engages in Coalition work so we were able to reflect the required matching amount without difficulty—but we can’t forget that as we move further along in this five-year cycle we will be needing to identify more solid sustainability resources if the Coalition is to continue to exist as a separate entity.
 - iii. **Action Steps:** At our next meeting we will review proposed modifications in the Action Plan, and the Year 7 Proposed Budget; Summer 2020 we will set up a meeting with Mr. Barber (HWRSD Director of Finance) to discuss establishing a 501c3 status for sustainability.

II. Programmatic Updates

- a. Cancellation/Postponement Issues
 - i. The Search Institute Partners in Prevention Leadership Forum and YouthLead Training
 - 1. Search is telling us that their schedule is filling for the fall so we’ve asked them to send us September and October dates of availability.
 - 2. Action Step: Based on the dates that we are given, Ruth and I will reach out to our stakeholders to make sure that there are no obvious conflicts, and re-book these events with the goal of completing before 10/30/20.
 - ii. YRBS 2020
 - 1. Not feasible for this year. DFC requires Core Measures to be submitted every *other* year, so not a problem from their point of view—although not optimal for us.

2. Action Step: Summer 2020, re-convene our Data Workgroup and determine other community-level data points can guide our logic model and action plan.
- iii. CADCA Summer “Mid-Year” Conference, July 26-30 2020 (Atlanta)
 - <https://www.cadca.org/news/mid-year-2020-online-registration-live>
 - 1. At our January meeting we had resigned ourselves to being unable to send students to DC in February, and set our sights on the summer mid-year conference
 - 2. Even if the July conference goes forward, I’ve been advised by MRHS Admin that it is not feasible to have a group selection ready for July, nor is it likely that we would feel comfortable about student health/safety for travel in the current world.
 - 3. Action Step: Ruth and I will monitor CADCA website. If not canceled and IF we are comfortable, we can consider sending a group of adult coalition members—funding available for 6 individuals, I believe, as we were hoping for 2 adults and 4 students.

b. Year 6 Spending and COVID-19-Related Opportunities for Coalition Involvement

- i. Between DFC and Stop Act, we have about \$20,000 in the Supplies lines and our “Other” budget category allocated for items like YMHFA and Lifeskills workbooks, promotional materials for our special events, and Coalition marketing materials. While we hope that things will change for Summer and Fall, we know that Spring activities will not occur.
- ii. Some opportunities have been presented to support the positive-messaging to students that seems so important to offset the disconnections being felt in our current situation.
 1. Use of our Coalition shopping bags for the distribution of the Chromebooks being loaned to any family that does not have a device for remote learning participation. (Approximately \$250, but we were able to use bags in our current inventory and will replace with an additional order) (Coalition info included in the bags!)
 2. “Spirit Towels” that will be given to all students transitioning from Middle to HS in the fall (\$675)
 3. “A Senior Lives Here” signs that will be placed on lawns of all members of the class of 2020. (\$2100)
 4. I’ve asked for a quote on something like a small First Aid Kit that could be branded with our logo as a possible Coalition gift to graduating seniors.
 5. Coalition purchase of self-care items that could be included in the food-distribution packages for families receiving District meal assistance.
- iii. Action Item: If there are no objections, Ruth and I will continue to review these opportunities and move ahead with small requests that fit within the scope of HWP4Y work, and can incorporate the Coalition name or logo. Between meetings, we will communicate by email for consensus approval on any single expenditure exceeding \$1000.
- iv. Action Item: Coalition partners should consider ways in which these funds could also support activities that are related to your own COVID-19 Youth Outreach.

- c. Personnel –Youth Engagement/ Communications Liaison position.
 - i. We are still on hold. Ruth is doing a beautiful job keeping these activities going right now, but we would like to start the summer and new school year with someone in place.
 - ii. We will be sending a job posting for your review prior to the next meeting.

Those are the “Big Bucket” items that we did not get to at our meeting on April 17. After reviewing, please reach out to either Ruth or me if there is anything that you feel would require the scheduling of a special meeting prior to our next meeting on Friday, May 15 at 1:00 PM—which will likely be another ZOOM!

In the meantime, and always, sending all good wishes for your continued health and safety, with continued gratitude for all that you do every day in support of the well-being of kids and families in our H-W Community.

IV. Closing

- A. A brief Meeting feedback survey will be emailed to all participants.
- B. Stay safe, be well, and THANK YOU for all you do, on behalf of all the youth, in Hampden and Wilbraham.
- C. Next meeting: 1 p.m. Friday, May 15th. More information will be forthcoming.



United for Safe, Healthy, and Drug-free Communities

We believe preventing and reducing youth substance use is a collective responsibility. We strive to implement a coordinated, comprehensive, and sustainable plan of evidenced based programs, activities and resources that positively impact a healthy childhood development of our youth.